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# The Arms of Canada



1921









ARMS OF CANADA .

# The Arms of Canada



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## BY THE KING

### A PROCLAMATION

*Declaring His Majesty's Pleasure concerning the Ensigns Armorial of  
the Dominion of Canada*


GEORGE R.I.

**W**HEREAS We have received a request from the Governor General in Council of Our Dominion of Canada that the Arms or Ensigns Armorial hereinafter described should be assigned to Our said Dominion.

We do hereby, by and with the advice of Our Privy Council, and in exercise of the powers conferred by the first Article of the Union with Ireland Act, 1800, appoint and declare that the Arms or Ensigns Armorial of the Dominion of Canada shall be Tierced in fesse the first and second divisions containing the quarterly coat following, namely, 1st Gules three lions passant guardant in pale or, 2nd, Or a lion rampant within a double tressure flory-counter-flory gules, 3rd, Azure a harp or stringed argent, 4th, Azure three fleurs-de-lis or, and the third division Argent three maple leaves conjoined on one stem proper. And upon a Royal helmet mantled argent doubled gules the Crest, that is to say, On a wreath of the colours argent and gules a lion passant guardant or imperially crowned proper and holding in the dexter paw a maple leaf gules. And for Supporters On the dexter a lion rampant or holding a lance argent, point or, flying therefrom to the dexter the Union Flag, and on the sinister A unicorn argent armed crined and unguled or, gorged with a coronet composed of crosses-patée and fleurs-de-lis a chain affixed thereto reflexed of the last, and holding a like lance flying therefrom to the sinister a banner azure charged with three fleurs-de-lis or; the whole ensigned with the Imperial Crown proper and below the shield upon a wreath composed of roses, thistles, shamrocks and lillies a scroll azure inscribed with the motto—A mari usque ad mare, and Our Will and Pleasure further is that the Arms or Ensigns Armorial aforesaid shall be used henceforth, as far as conveniently may be, on all occasions wherein the said Arms or Ensigns Armorial of the Dominion of Canada ought to be used.

Given at Our Court at Buckingham Palace, this twenty-first day of November, in the year of Our Lord One thousand nine hundred and twenty-one, and in the twelfth year of Our Reign.

GOD SAVE THE KING



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## MEMORANDUM

REGARDING

### The Arms of Canada



ARMORIAL bearings owe their existence to the need of providing men with some mark of identification. In time of peace this was a matter of no small moment; in time of war a matter of life and death. Until comparatively recent times, as history is reckoned, few men could read; our ancestors had not the advantage of newspaper portraits, moving pictures, and the thousand other ways which we possess of recognizing and identifying people. Heraldry may be termed a form of picture-writing which was worked out in the Middle Ages to afford a means of recognition. The people of the Middle Ages had fine artistic perceptions—finer perhaps than those of us their descendants—and in particular they liked bright colours and had excellent taste in using them. The result was that the system which they devised was not only ingenious and practical, but it was beautiful as well. Partly because it is beautiful, and partly because it is useful, the system has survived.

Despite our printing, our photographs, our modern inventions, we still make use of emblems, badges and symbols. There is no country that has not a flag as the emblem or symbol of its nationality—a symbol that can be distinguished at a glance. So too the uniform of the soldier indicates the country to which he belongs. The maple leaf at once suggests Canada; the thistle, Scotland; the rose, England; the shamrock, Ireland; the leek, Wales; the lily, France; and each is used as an emblem. The people of the Middle Ages were orderly, and they reduced to a system this method of appealing to the eye. The coat of arms is the most elaborate form of this system; in it, indeed, the system has become a science. It is curious to note that no country abandons the practice of using armorial bearings; and we may conclude that badges to tell at a glance important facts about people and things are necessary, and that a nation needs emblems and symbols to preserve traditions and inspire love of country. Of these symbols, the coat of arms and the flag are the chief; and while the flag is the more frequently used, the coat of arms is the older, and often is the foundation of the flag.

The coat of arms began in a thoroughly practical manner. Soldiers carried banners bearing the emblems of their chiefs, for uniforms were unknown, and would have been too expensive in early times. Every man of importance on going into battle, with the visor of his helmet down, took care to have this identification mark painted



on his shield. When he travelled on peaceful occasions, he had it embroidered on his coat; he had it carved in front of his house, and when lodged at an inn, he announced that he was staying there by hanging up his painted shield outside. Young people of any social position, while they seldom were taught to read or write, were carefully trained in armoury; and when they found themselves in a town the day before a tournament, they could tell exactly who were there, by glancing at the display of shields.

Beginning with a simple use of badges and devices, this expedient was developed into a science which did more than merely identify a man: it contrived to tell in a small amount of space a surprising amount about his social position and family history. From a man's coat of arms it might be possible to tell that his father was still alive—that he was a younger son—that he had contracted an important marriage—that he traced his descent from two or more families of importance—that he belonged to a younger branch of his family, and so forth. For example, the arms of the Prince of Wales are the Royal Arms with certain marks upon them which indicate that he is an eldest son whose father is still alive; while the arms of the Duke of Connaught are the Royal Arms with certain other marks which show that he is a younger son of a Sovereign. And again, "quarterings" on a shield show that the possessor is descended from more than one family entitled to bear arms; and what are called "differences" indicate that the bearer belongs to a junior branch of the family.

This matter of quarterings and differences is important enough to warrant a little attention. A coat of arms is a sort of family possession, shared in various ways by the several members of a family. To take an imaginary case, we may suppose that early in the Middle Ages some man assumed or was granted arms. These might be very simple, say a gold band slanting across a blue field. Each eldest son, on succeeding to the leadership of the family, would inherit the right to that simple device; and, if the family were to continue in unbroken line to the present day, the arms still would retain the original simple form, unless through marriage the arms of other families had meanwhile been incorporated in the shield. But the younger sons of the founder would use their father's arms with some modification, such as some object in the field or on the band, or as a border about the shield, this being a "difference". As each younger son set up a branch of the family, the process would begin again, the eldest sons inheriting the simpler form, the younger sons adding differences. The right to the arms would be shared by the daughters, and this led to "quartering". From time to time a man entitled to bear arms would marry a lady entitled to arms in her own right. Originally, in such a case, two shields would be used; this being inconvenient, the arms were halved, or in the technical language of heraldry, "impaled", the husband's being on the right (the spectator's left). And if the wife was, in an heraldic sense, an heiress—that is to say, if she had no brother—her children would quarter her arms: in other words, they would



divide the family shield into four quarters, putting their father's arms and their mother's arms in alternate divisions. Subsequent marriages might lead to fresh quarterings, and a family of considerable antiquity may thus embody in its arms a number of coats, each indicative of a marriage and of descent.

A knowledge of both of these technical processes is necessary to the understanding of the Arms of Canada.

The Royal Arms are what are termed in heraldry "arms of dominion". They are the personal arms of the King, and yet they are his personal arms because he is King. For example, Henry VII was a Tudor, and as head of that family had the Tudor arms; but he did not use them, and did not incorporate them in the Royal Arms. Family has succeeded family on the throne, and the changes made in the arms have had regard to the countries concerned, and not to the families.

The Royal Arms of England were a red shield with three golden lions. Edward III claimed the crown of France, and signified his claim by assuming, and quartering, the Royal Arms of France—a blue shield with golden fleurs-de-lys; from that time onward the Kings of England bore as their arms a shield divided into four, with the Arms of France in the first and fourth and those of England in the second and third divisions, France occupying the place of honour by right of seniority. In this form the arms continued until the accession of the Stuarts. James I was reigning King of Scotland, and as such bore the Royal Arms of

Scotland, a golden shield with a red lion, enclosed in what is called a double tressure, a sort of border of two thin lines; he added the Arms of Scotland to those of England and France, and also added the Arms of Ireland, a blue field with a golden harp. When George I ascended the throne, he added the Arms of Hanover, and the Royal Arms combined those of England, Scotland, Ireland, France and Hanover. Thus when Canada became part of the British Empire, her new King bore the fleur-de-lys. In 1803 George III dropped the Arms of France, and Queen Victoria on her accession dropped those of Hanover, as she did not succeed to that throne. Thus the Royal Arms assumed the form with which we are familiar, a combination of the arms of England, Scotland and Ireland.

By the term "arms" is meant the device inscribed on the shield. Armorial bearings include not merely the arms, but also certain accessories, such as the crest, the supporters and the motto. The crest originally was a device placed on top of a knight's helmet, to help to distinguish him when the visor was down. Persons of a certain rank were allowed to have their shield flanked by representations of human beings, or animals, these being termed "supporters." The use of a motto is familiar to all. In addition to these, custom has sanctioned the use of certain embellishments which properly speaking are not part of the arms. The crest often is placed on a helmet, which latter is displayed in different positions for persons of different ranks; when an elaborate decoration is desired, the helmet is



draped in what is termed "mantling," a survival of the lambrequin or cloth which covered the helmet as a protection against rain and sun; as this was supposed to be slashed and cut in battle, the folds of the mantling are represented with deeply indented edges. Occasionally other ornaments are used, such as a display of symbolic flowers between the shield and the scroll upon which the motto is shown. These are but matters of personal fancy and are not part of the "achievement of arms", as the combination of arms, crest, supporters and motto is termed.

Returning to our history, the crest of the Kings of England was the lion, in the position with which we are familiar; and the English supporters were two lions, one on each side of the shield, while there were two mottoes—"Honi soit qui mal y pense" ("Dishonoured be he who thinks ill of it") and the battle-cry "Dieu et mon Droit" ("God and my Right"). The crest of Scotland is a lion sitting up, facing the spectator, a dagger in one paw and a sceptre in the other; the supporters were two unicorns, one on each side of the shield, each carrying a banner; and there are two mottoes—"Nemo me impune lacessit" ("No one harms me with impunity"), and "In Defens". King James VI of Scotland, on becoming James I of England, took for supporters one lion and one unicorn; and since then, as the old nursery rhyme reminds us, the lion and the unicorn have confronted each other.

At this point an interesting thing is to be observed. King James I and the sovereigns who

followed him lived usually in England, where their armorial bearings are arranged so as to exhibit England as the senior partner; the English crest and mottoes are used instead of the Scottish; the lion supporter is put on the right of the shield, the unicorn on the left; the banners disappear, and the English arms displayed in the first quarter, are repeated in the fourth, the Scottish arms being in the second and the Irish in the third. But in Scotland the Royal Arms are arranged differently, the attitude of the Scots being that His Majesty the King of Scotland happens to reign over other realms as well. The crest and mottoes are those of Scotland; the unicorn is on the right, the lion on the left of the shield; and within the shield Scotland takes the first and fourth quarters, England the second and Ireland the third. In England the King has one achievement of arms, and in Scotland he has another. This fact has a direct bearing on our problem in Canada.

The question of the Arms of Canada until now has remained in an unsatisfactory position. His Majesty is King of Canada as well as of his other dominions; and in Canada the Royal Arms, in their English form, always have been freely used. Soon after Confederation a Great Seal was required for Canada, and a design was approved by a Royal Warrant dated 26 May, 1868. This design displayed, quarterly, the arms of the four confederated provinces—Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick; it was not used for the Great Seal, but it was gradually adopted as the Arms of Canada. From time to time other



provinces came into the Confederation, and it was a common practice to add their arms to the original design, with the final result that it was not unusual to see, jumbled together on one shield, the arms of all nine provinces. It had long been felt that this was open to objection; and a Committee, appointed to submit proposals, recommended the adoption of a coat of arms which has since been approved by the Government and authorized by the King.

Before describing the arms, one more remark remains. Countries sometimes have national flags denoting not kingship but race. The English, for example, from the time of the second Crusade, bore as their banner the red cross of St. George on a white field, while the white cross of St. Andrew on a blue field was the banner of the Scots. These banners were combined in 1707, when the Kingdoms of England and Scotland were united; in 1801, the Cross of St. Patrick was added (white on a red field); and thus the union jack became the national flag as distinguished from the Royal Standard.

Turning again to the Arms of Canada, three facts are worthy of attention. First, that Canadians stand to their King in as close a relation as do any of his subjects elsewhere; secondly, that Canada, an integral part of the British Empire, has emerged from the War a member of the League of Nations; and, lastly, that Canada was founded by the men of four different races—French, English, Scottish and Irish—and that Canadians inherit the language, laws, literature and

glory—and the arms—of all four mother countries. Upon these three considerations has been based the achievement of arms which the King has authorized Canada to bear.

The arms are those of England, Scotland, Ireland and France, with a “difference” to mark them as Canadian, namely, on the lower third of the shield, a sprig of maple on a silver field.

The crest is a lion holding in its paw a red maple leaf, a symbol of sacrifice.

The supporters are, with some slight distinctions, the lion and unicorn of the Royal Arms. The lion upholds the union jack, and the unicorn the ancient banner of France.

The motto is new—“A mari usque ad mare”—“From sea to sea”, or, in a phrase familiar in Canadian politics and Canadian literature, “Ocean to Ocean”. It is an extract from the Latin version of verse 8 of the 72nd Psalm, which in the Authorized Version is: “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth”. The Latin reads: “Et dominabitur a mari usque ad mare, et a flumine usque ad terminos orbis terrarum”. There is a tradition that the Fathers of Confederation derived the designation “Dominion” from this verse.













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